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CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 15

No. 1 — Autumn, 1951

AUGUST 1951

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IN MEMORY OF NELLIE McCLUNG

The Calgary Branch of the Canadian Authors Association has forwarded to the Foundation Fund the sum of Sixty Dollars, contributed by its members in memory of the late Nellie McClung, distinguished Canadian writer.

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The contents of this Quarterly are indexed in The Canadian Index, published by The Canadian Library Association.

CANADIAN
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Autumn 1951

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"To write not to be understood is no less vaine than to speak not to be heard. Fooles and Madmen use to talk to themselves in Publique, and he that publishes that which he would have no Man understand but himself do's the same thing."

SAMUEL BUTLER

BRAMBLE PATCH

A brambly tangle by the hooting road!
Yet here, as on the larger thoroughfare,
Life hums and rushes; and its agents dare
Peril and death, and lift a staggering load.
Now a striped bee has made her brief abode
In a white blossom-heart; and here and there
One black-and-lemon-waisted zooms in air,
Or spirals—driven by what fierce, dim goad?

And sky-blue midget moths come fluttering down;
And with sails flapping from a flower-breast,
Great butterflies of bronze or amber-brown;
And tinselled flies, and gnats that never rest,
Lend to each arm-length bramble patch a zest
As of a throbbing, business-crowded town.

Stanton A. Coblentz

REACTION

Must every road climb steeply
Ruthlessly
To turrets of snow,
Glittering and jagged turrets of snow and fire
Guarding a golden city?
Must every paradise rest on the upper side of a star?
And ecstasy
Bright as the lightning's white-forked terror
Be the whole heart's desire?

For awhile,
For a season of mild moons
And round suns thawing the judgments of men,
I would like a lazier road
And a lesser goal.
For a season of tiredness I would like level grasses
And undriven hours.

Must they be forever right—
The orators who deny us peace—
Shouting,
Whipping us toward cliffs and torn feet?
Are their mountain citadels greater than the slow pastures?
The eagle's cry better to be remembered
Than the thrush in a cedar wood?

For awhile,
For a handful of moons
I would like a road laid down where no voice shouts,
Too tranquil for battles or forced marches or overcoming,
Too level for climbing.

Isobel McFadden

ONE

We are women in a cold hallway.
All our hearts beat quickly and our breaths,
Shallow with shock, draw quickly. On this day
Very close to us came one of the world's deaths.

She whom it came too close to weeps alone.
She will not have us with her; she asks God
Why it was hers, hers, hers, why like a stone
Her child lies—hers, hers of all the world.

Out of nothing they come to us and our fears
Go with them always. Now her fears for him
Are done. We bow in pity, but our tears
Have in them thankfulness it was not ours.

Not ours, not ours. Beneath our sorrow sing
Our secret hearts—"Not mine . . . Tonight I set
All places at my table, and I bring
To each pillow a special tenderness."

Dorothy Roberts

THE SWORD

On the mantel it lies, recalling war, the old division.
Though its mission was to heal, the owner felt the hurt—
Hands alone can never wreak a fission.

But behind the hand was the heart, audacious pride,
Or why do they polish it now and keep it here,
Unflecked and keen as when its hard wish thumped his side?

In the soft cool house the dominant steel's élan
Invades the morning meal and family prayers
As though, wiped clean of blood, it kept the nisus of the man.

Fingers that have no cause to tremble, clench, or strain
Are drawn to whet the flabby flesh upon that edge
And feel the faint hallucinations of virtue and of pain.

Charles Edward Eaton

AT EASE

Unbuttoning my attitudes, I rest.
The evening paper shakes out its disasters
And heaps them all about my chair and rug.
And from my radio, tumble many crises
To heap confusion deeper. Tragedies
Of far-off continents become more real
Than conflicts skirmishing within me now.
So from the world, half-regulated jungle,
All forested with teeming paradoxes,
Is funnelled in a sense of guilt and fear.
My walls are papered with regret. My clock
Candidly comments that the time is wrong.
My books are leaking dramas that keep bleeding
Assorted traumas whose vibrations stir
Wave-lengths, which loud exhausts of febrile autos
Cannot blot out. I look up in the mirror
To see the rumor of myself. It mocks
That I am just as much a prisoner
As its pale form interned within the glass . . .

Louis Ginsberg

IMPOSTOR

Every twilight they saw him on his rounds
begging shadowy covert; inching along mean streets,
ambling beneath a slouch of roofs, and frequently,
as though before the harsh, rejecting word,
stooped by a gate: they said he was the dusk's familiar,
living from hand to mouth; who furtively, spilling the
sepia powder as he went, took snuff. But once, when
he had come where pavement ends, he spurned the wind
that like a surly cur ran sniffing at his heels: the
admonished wind forthwith sprang up again, and blowing wide his shabby cloak showed pansy purples and
a glint of silver.

Ethel Kirk Grayson

NIGHTMARE

(After A Small Excursion In The Classics)

Groping along the main,
  Vast galleries—
Crawling through Plato's brain
  On hands and knees;

Guessing at vaulted height,
  Pausing at turns,
Feeling the throb of light
  Where no light burns;

Using my living wit,
  Searching to find
Arches of years still lit
  By a dead man's mind.

Martha Banning Thomas

DEATH IN THE GARDEN

Death came to my garden today,
When the trees hung limp in the summer heat;
He slithered in and he slithered away
On furry belly and velvet feet.
Death came by with flashing claws,
And muscles coiled like a clockwork spring,
With glittering eyes and fearful jaws,
And all the terror that death can bring.

Death hardly larger than my shoe,
But monstrous he must have been to the bird
For an agonizing second or two
Before the feathery vision blurred.
Death stole a song, and songs are rare,
And all who sing will agree to that;
But something waits in the garden there
To claim the life of a yellow cat.

Len G. Selle

BONE AND BASTION

If sea beat against sea,
Without a shore,
Would oceans clash and roar,
Climbing to stars, having the whole unguarded planet for
Catastrophe,
And salt sea smother?

If heart beat against heart,
And no ribbed wall between,
Would that close throbbing thrust them clean
Apart,
Which had so yearned to lean
One on another?

If bone and bastion keep
Disaster
Walled away . . . dear land, lie high and strong!
And heart, stay cradled deep
Where you belong,
And beat the faster!

Martha Banning Thomas

LOOKING ON BARNS

Always, looking on barns, I am comforted,
Full barns, that guarantee content,
Seedtime and harvest, grain gathered
And the soil tilled;
Provender for beasts, whose dumb need
Is man's need too,
Fulfillment and the fruitfulness of seed.
Empty barns are symbols of destruction,
Scorched acres and a ravaged land,
Evil and spoilage of a good inheritance;
Let us have full barns and peace.

Lettie Ann Hill

EQUESTRIANS IN THE SPRING NIGHT

Horse and girl are one in flowing line.
Their lengthening shadow on the diminishing snow
Is a dark wave—a blue wind blowing.
Up the roadway ripple the other equestrians—
Throaty shout from a grey jacket;
From blonde crop uncovered, brief laughter,
Even the harshness of which is woven
Into the pattern of movement and horses
And horsemen, above the diminishing snow.

From the snow in foreground flows
Unevenly, the sodden turf of spring:
The mountain is a background somnulence,
Its convention compromised only where the Cross
Glares unslumbering through unleafed branches.

In distant flurry of hoof-beats, men and girls,
Shaped to the horses, drift
Into the spring night; and the diminishing snow,
Shadowless, gives back a mixture of street light and sky light.

Goodridge MacDonald

THE OLD TIME

I loved the winter evenings
When sleighs were passing by;
And more like ships than vehicles,
I often wondered why . . .

And through the windy townships
With soft Algonquin names
The caravans are moving.
And children playing games

Break off with rapt expressions,
While all the townsmen stand
To watch the outland merchants
Unload their contraband.

With cabbages and honey,
With blooming daffodils,
They spread the long bare tables
With summer codicils.

In afternoons they vanished,
The sloop and caravels—
And deep in drowned white houses,
Invisible drowned bells

That gossiped silver scandal
On every market day.
From morning to the evening
They had so much to say.

And down the starlit highway,
Somehow Olympian,
With lantern and with sleigh bells,
The ghostly Percheron;

And scenting open country,
They left the town below
To race the long blue shadows
Like greyhounds on the snow.

Alfred W. Purdy

THE WIND

Cold blows the wind
Across the valleys,
Across the hills,
Across the plains.

Cold blows the wind
Through cities of night,
Through towns and hamlets,
Leaving nothing untouched
Not even the hearts of men.

Thelma Nadler

WIND OF THE SPIRIT

The bare, black branches in its hands it takes,
And beats the old brown grasses tirelessly,
Tears at the buds, and like a demon shakes
Our little cottage—churns the wild March sea,
Turns to a frightened thing the cringing bird,
Scatters the gulls about the cloud-strewn day,
Sings a strange song the jungle must have heard;
Before man conquered earth wind had its say.

So comes again to winter of the heart
A spirit-urge that rouses up the soul,
Drops off the shackles, takes a running start,
Tosses off debris holding back the goal,
Takes the initial step to freedom, won
By sloughing non-essentials, one by one.

Clara Hill Maunsell

SEA BURIAL

Happy Margaret,
Early
Hast thou returned
Unto the deep.
Unhappy Parents.

Burns Martin

AUTUMN

When the dreamy smoke-blue weather
Splashes glory on the vine,
Dusky wings gem the horizon
With a V-day sign.

Maples, marching down the hillside,
Flaunt gold and scarlet wares
And the cello winds are strumming
Old thanksgiving airs.

Amy Bissett England

THE LEAF IS CLUE

Who robbed the sun of strength? What made
Calm leaves desert their boughs and go
With winds of trespass to invade
The helpless valleys far below?
Surely it is a hasty hand
That shrouds these hills before they're dead!
Here is a footprint in the sand
Where mortal never visited.
Let's lock the house, then hide its key,
And lean against the shaken pane
A moment in perplexity.
Is this the bloodied coat of Cain?
Yes, here's the evidence: He slew
His brother, and the leaf is clue.

Lawrence P. Spingarn

EVERY MORNING

I hear the milkman's bottles clink
  Their warnings to forget my ease;
I hear the chimes announce the hour
  For more responsibilities.

My radio pours disasters out;
  But sugar in my coffee-cup
Can scarcely sweeten doleful news:
  I sip the latest crises up.

After the radio's lament
  The world is in a woeful state,
The morning paper on my porch
  Upbraids me I awakened late.

I set my habits and my tie;
  And by the sunlight now befriended,
I breathe a little easier
  The atom bomb has not descended.

Louis Ginsberg

NO PHOENIX

I saw a gaunt gardener
Bear summer in a barrow,
Laboriously trudging
To and fro, to and fro.

I saw him stand shaken
As chilled to the marrow,
After he had touched a match
To her improvised bier.

With a look in his eyes
Like a thorn-spiked sparrow
He turned from the ashes
Of her funeral pile.

Robina Stewart

SONG FOR AN OFFICE

In the winter morning, dim and chill,
When hissing heat creeps through the groaning pipes,
A bell rings loudly—one must rise to greet
Another day with pencil and with book—
A pencil, always sharp, a book divided neatly.

What is there of life in cereal, cold and hard,
Toast eaten quickly, crumbs on a kitchen table;
The locked door, the crowded bus, the daily dissection of weather;
What lasting fingerprint will come through endless time
To mark the well typewritten word?

Yours of the 15th duly noted, Yours very truly,
(Yours very what—what very truly—)
File upon file, page upon page, word upon word;
But what is done when the matter has been completed to our satisfaction,
When the thanks in anticipation have brought results?

Coffee at ten fifteen, and a talk on
Last night's dance, television, broken heart.
Lunch at one—how many cheese sandwiches
Cheerfully eaten entitle one to a martyr's crown.
How many calories in a cream puff, a banana split,
Or tears in a sharp word bitterly regretted?

Home to a locked door down a grey hall,
To a radio that talks to you while you heat the soup or cook the hamburger—
Tonight the brain rattles with pages and pages,
Set down hurriedly, hurriedly tossed to the printed page,
Signed, sealed, stamped, mailed after closing time.
(What if one missed the bus—there will be another).

In the winter morning, dim and chill,
When hissing heat creeps through the groaning pipes,
A bell rings loudly, one must rise to greet,
Another day with pencil and with book,
Another day to Something vaguely known
That makes the bell ring early and the buzzer sound—
And the bird sing.

Audrey O'Kelly

SOUTH INDIAN IMPRESSIONS

Flamingoes trailing horizonwards
In the arrogant death of the sun
And the water swaying, a shimmered veil
Now dissolving the wave into one
Into one with the sea, into one.

Timeless, ceaseless, movement and colour
Quivering tones drench the dimming light.
Flamingoes, sky, the shining water
Burnished waves curled away for the night
For the night with the sea, for the night.

Heather Kerr

THE VERB TO FAIL

All in this room is as it always was,
the curtains drawn across the night
and gently pushed by April air,
the smells of wet black earth and daffodils,
the green rug soft as turf beneath my feet,
the amber light reflected
in the mirror's silent pool,
the haven of the bed, and your rich hair
spilled on the pillow . . . all the same,
this room and April and your cloudy hair.

Why do we shudder,
why does frost sift through our murmured love;
hands tremble now, but not deliciously as once,
we listen not to the rhythm of our hearts
but to the breath of menace in the night.

Across the world young hands
that once touched flesh as sweet as yours
grope in the crimson mud,
and lips that tasted April air
gasp in the stench of gutted towns.

I think that you and I are brave
but bravery cannot meet this thing;
all that our minds have honored lies defiled.
Put out the light,
I take your hand as one who fails his destiny.

Alan Donovan

FOREVER

As the mercurial hours and minutes flee,
Forever is a word that we must learn—
Time's recognition of eternity,
From whose mysterious void is no return.

Albert Ralph Korn

OLD TOLL-GATE HOUSE

The wreckers are tearing down an old cottage
To make way for a new filling station.
For near a century that weather-greyed frame house
Stood where a toll-gate once barred the highway.
There, some years ago, a shrivelled, bent old man
Still lived—he and his house aging together.
On summer days he sat beside the open door
Where a tall lilac bush grew wild
And petunias and sweet-williams bloomed.
He watched the motor-cars speed by, one after one,
Shaking his head, half mystified.
But when the beat of horses' hooves was heard approaching
He would rise and hobble to the lattice gate
And stare as the team went clattering past,
While the driver waved his whip in greeting.
Still he would lean, gazing after—to note once more
That the toll-gate bar was no longer there,
Then slowly shamble back, lips moving on the mumbled words,
"They will let nothing be!—let nothing be!"

Florence Westacott

MARTA: SINGING

My house was muddled, moody, dusty, old—
A bit of silver tarnished; hearths all cold.

She was of northern countries bred, where work
Is singing happiness, where none would shirk
The blacking of a stove, linen washed white.
She holds my house in spell of new delight.

Something intangible has filled the place;
(Costly or cheap, it has some special grace.)

Scented with soap, my house now seems to be
A bird-cage where a bird has been set free.

Florence Randal Livesay

STORM

There are wild-horses in the bay today,
White tossing manes that flee before the gale.
The pounding surf, like hoofbeats, and the spray
Tear at the beach and scour the fretted shale.
The tumbling boulders make a hollow roar
The screaming shingle draws a sobbing breath
The waves ride in and thunder on the shore
With deep-toned diapason boom of death.

Sidney Bushell

REMEMBERED OCTOBER

Battered old book! A vague expectancy
Thrills in the fingertips at touch of it.

Publius Vergilius Maro, born near Mantua
On the fifteenth of October—October—October.
Cool, spacious October morning. Going up steps
Ready for Latin; a misery—and yet—
(Write the translation in your copybook.)
There was an ancient city; Tyrian colonists held it;
Carthage, facing in the distance Italy and the mouths of
the Tiber.
Poring over the picture of Dido building Carthage:
Sharp-cut stone of block and pillar and arch
By the shining stream, under the shaggy hill.

Warm chill smell of October afternoon.
Sauntering home, bookbag slung on shoulder,
Past white picket fences, into a level light.
Biting richly through the hard red rind of an apple,
Savouring the red-veined white juiciness of the apple,
Savouring the rhythm of footfalls in the swirling leaves:
There was an ancient city; Tyrian colonists held it;
Facing in the distance Italy and the mouth of the Tiber.

Julia Grace Wales

SHALLOW TO DEEP

The gone moment, the palely once loved, is made for the seeking,
Is lost in the seeking, the thought-drenched magnified by the dark,
The dawn-meaning of a glance, the turned word forgettable,
Now noon stark.

This our whateverness stalks out of the dream rosily naked,
Dove-eyed, sunbright splintered, sweet as the broken crust.
The gold bird sings in the unbelievable foliage
To the unhearing dust.

All sound now the sound of morning infrangible,
Sob and laugh faceted by wind over water, water tossed by wind,
High screaming gull flash, blown mist mellow, the varnished sand cherry,
Marsh smells time-thinned.

This is for never finding, the lost moment glory,
Never finding, to seek anew, to urge from shallow to deep,
Static to flow, make lip speech of tears and laughter,
Losing, to reap.

Myrtle Adams

FROM A CAR WINDOW

Always I shall remember
How she stood
Like a spirit of the forest
Etched against the marble-white
Of the slim, slim birches—
A statue moulded with grace.
The delicate turn of the head,
The soft velvet eyes
Raised in curious yet timid fashion
As though poised for flight—
The little fawn
Against the slim white birches.

Ethel Erroll Boyd

THE FORCES OF SPRING

Build up the walls of brick;
They must be stout and high and thick
To stand against spirea's tide
Foaming in green against the door;
Stiffen the ranks of mind and pride;
Make haste, make haste to pour
Their stoutest mortar on the floor
Where insurrection stirs in sod and root;
Be quick! See where the ragged but persistent corps
Of chickweed gains upon the sill!

Sandbag the study wall
Against the whitethroat's martial call;
Shut out the piping high and shrill
Of each relentless daffodil,
Too high for ear but piercing to the will.

Draw down the shade
Against the scarlet flags and maple made
In secret cell and in the dawn unfurled
Wherewith to storm the world.

How shall the calculating mind be stayed
To hold its own against this rout,
Abetted by the traitor in the heart
That cries above the din,
"Beware; the foe is IN;
It is the friend you have shut out!"

Elizabeth Chesley

POWER LINES

The live forest was levelled
Before the city rose.
Now in streets and alleys
The dead-tree forest grows

In my garden I planted a tree;
A living shoot to grow for me.

The calvary branches blossom
With glass and porcelain.
But he who climbs for dead-tree fruit
Will never climb again.

My tree is felled. Its sapling top
Dared touch the dead-trees' copper crop.

Raymond Hull

IN NEW SNOW

No sun has fallen on this snow before,
Fresh as the sky it is, an airy floor,
But with the lightness almost of their flight
The birds' feet print it in the morning light.

The birds' feet print it round the hawthorn tipped
With scarlet berries. Where the shadows dipped
In bluest sky lie spread about the wood
Are cleft the hoofmarks where the deer have stood.

The deer have stood and started, turned and leapt
Back into hidden depths, snow-billows swept
From boughs behind them. Poised to frisk or flee
Have come quick creatures out of hole and tree.

Splotchy and padded, wild and dazzled run
The tracks of squirrel and rabbit where the sun
Has shone a crystal hour. Bright flakes hold
The scampering scratch of field mice quick with cold.

And in amongst these early markings wind
My footprints weighted down with heavy mind,
Telling my coming, telling that I know
The need of something written in new snow.

Dorothy Roberts

IN MAINE WOODS

Deep in a wood of pine, bunchberries
Spread scarlet on the ground:
Minuter, wilder cherries
Where needles dull the sound
Of a footstep without mark
Under somber boughs and dark.
Red squirrels scamper, scold
And decorate a limb:
Forest light is dim.
In contrast to the pools of virile red,
Indian pipes rise bloodless from the mold,
Frugal, ashen symbols of the old
Whom time has bled.

Eleanor Glenn Wallis

WINTER PIECE

Where lately clover-studded grass
  roofed the lodge of the ground-swallow,
Winter mounts his carronade.

Dawn comes in bleached tatters;
  his lean, grey fingers
  probe shuttered windows
  and snow-screened burrows.

Gone is the swaggering bee
  and his tipsy croon;
Drained and frost-seared
  each green-stemmed goblet.

Wind is a neighing steed;
  his flying hooves scatter the white ash
  of the sun's fire.

A bloodless hand at its throat,
the river hushes its song;
Its perfume-laden caravels,
autumn's drift of wild blossoms,
are long since lost to piracy.

Night's jewelled eyes are unpitying
as the moon's mocking stare.

Only the Northern Lights keep covenant,
raying their luminous code
to solace the dismantled earth,
And retrieving for each heart
its vanished April.

Kathryn Munro

BANSHEE

I shall know when summer is ended, though no leaf fall,
Though I pay no heed to the chrysanthemum and salvia,
Nor to the summons of the cardinal,
Feasting upon the ripened sunflower seed,
Though I pay no heed at all.

I have watched the monkshood and marigold,
In the waxing and waning sun,
I have tilled and watered and snipped
Their blossoms, one by one.

Though I turn from the blue morning glory
Tarrying till late afternoon,
Though I turn away suddenly,
I shall not mutter "So soon?"

But should the jays cry persistently
I may drool at the mouth,
Pack my soul's accoutrements
And famish for the south.

Robina Stewart

THE DISCOVERY

The yellowed page is turned,
and covers close
on root and bloom of pure
ascendant prose.

Again the covers part,
the pages bound
in 1900, still
complete and sound.

No thing is half so dark
as lore unplumbed,
this living volume left
alone, unthumbed.

Joseph Joel Keith

I SEE THESE FACES

Hunger is shame also,
I have seen the bread-line faces . . .
sleet in the eyes,
the insulted mouths, the limp shoulders,
the listening hands;
all day long this river of shame
trickling along the pavements
between the granite guilt of the buildings,
all night long this fog of shame
thick and grey in the alleys.
Diamonds winking in the windows,
sleek traffic purring along the avenues,
the lascivious smirk and little lizard eyes
of the well-fed . . . I see this too.
Shame-dwellers, where are your swords?

Edward V. Craddock

SUBTERFUGE

Full well I know the wit a Mind conferred
As deft protection on the shy of soul,
How fledgeling plover move, a grayness blurred
On blue-gray shingle, tricking hawk and owl;
How leaves flick shadows on a sunny bole
And seem the frolic of a phantom bird,
And how the hanging moths are like a scroll
Of last year's maple on a hedge unstirred.
And well I know your ways, how deep concern
Dives in the tones and topics of a room
And hides in laughter thoughts that leap and burn;
O when you most deliberately assume
The dewy quiet of untrampled fern
I know you nearest by a fallen plume.

Geoffrey Johnson

MINER'S WIFE

A miner's wife
In the gathering gloom
Moans for her man
In the mine's dark womb.

Numb is her body,
Numb her soul
And black her grief
Like a lump of coal.

She knows in her heart
He'll never come back.
The northwind howls
Like a maniac.

Alone in her kitchen,
Her shoulders bowed,
The earth is a corpse,
The snow a shroud.

Lucia Trent

ADAM

Had I been sure as morning's golden star,
or tumbled, like a river, from its source;
certain as shining planet, annular,
that swings in heaven and ever holds its course;
timed as the night; its plans forever are
that some men toil while other mortals sleep
in darkness, with the hand beneath the cheek,
safe in the knowledge day cannot be far.
How then could I, forgetfully, disdain
that I was given a will; not chained, as tide
drawn by a moon; not made to wax and wane?
Ah, Eden's gate, for me, was all too wide;
Abel was felled by his own brother, Cain,
and Him who made me free I crucified!

Dorothy Dumbrille

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Book Reviews

FOOTNOTE TO THE LORD'S PRAYER AND OTHER POEMS—Kay Smith—First Statement Press, 1951—36 pp., $1.00.

Whether a reader enjoys "modern" poetry or not, whether a reader has any personal religion or not, surely he or she could not but be moved by the frequent beauty and strength of the title poem of this book—first published collection by this writer of Saint John, New Brunswick. Especially in the first sections of the poem, the emotion and conviction behind the words carry the reader forward with a great sweep of joyous feeling.

> "Our Father . . . when grass points to creation's inwardness,
> trembling with a million shining clues in the light,
> brushing the naked feet with living poems . . . "

> "From womb of night
> leaps the Light,
> the heart is all covered with morning.
> Dance, dance
> of deliverance,
> the mountain, the stone is singing;"

There are rough spots, crudities of phrase that break the forward sweep, and the emotion does not hold to the same rich height throughout, but there is enough of the excellent to outweigh the mediocre—regrettable though it is that the mediocre is there.

There is an interesting long poem, or group of poems, "CONVERSATIONS WITH A MIRROR", and a number of short poems, some which may seem obscure to some readers. But the obscurity is only surface, a little patient consideration and the meaning is rewardingly clear. Not that the sense is ever shallow—when the surface obscurity is brushed off one finds on re-readings further layers of meaning under the first, and all of them important.

In "THE EYE OF HUMILITY",

> "The seed of Adam enters, Man of Sorrows,
> with the eternal stars of wounds in His thigh;"

and one recognizes that this religious theme runs like a strong undercurrent through almost all the work in this volume.

It is no easy sentimentality, no pie-in-the-sky religion. Like a number of other intellectuals today, Kay Smith sees man's need for repentance of sin, for surgery for sin before his heart can be "all covered with morning". Her religion too cries against social injustice, as in "IMPECCABLE ONES".

In spite of the disappointments of the sudden crudities of phrase (not of thought), the emotional let-down of the stanza or cadence which does not quite come off, there is great power in this book. And a powerful promise of finer work to come. Every poet has an endless struggle to subdue words into a compliant tool to express his thought and feeling. When Kay Smith wins this struggle more completely it should be a day to mark in our literary history.

Anne Marriott

CRISIS IN ENGLISH POETRY—V. de S. Pinto—Hutchinson's University Library—228 pp., 7s. 6d.

Every student of poetry should possess this book, for in addition to an able presentation of its specific theme, it provides understanding studies of several of the English poets who pioneered verse developments between 1880 and 1940.

Professor Pinto's central proposition is that the coming of the "mechanical age" ousted poetry from the safe position it had long occupied as "an essential part of the culture of the triumphant bourgeoisie". In the uncultured modern wilderness, poets faced the choice of attempting to create a realistic poetry with the ugly material to hand, or taking "the voyage within"—an exploration of the spirit which threatened to dehumanize their verse. Only a few thus far have succeeded in solving the problem by combining realism and "the voyage within", the critic contends. Those in whose work he sees this achievement are Hardy, Yeats, Hopkins, T. S. Elio and Edith Sitwell.

Prof. Pinto cites chapter and verse in support of his theory. What is perhaps as important, he presents the whole in a readable style that only rarely smacks of the lecture hall. One may disagree with his conclusions. I for one am far from convinced that the production of poetry for small and presumably diminishing groups of the cultured "elite" is a promising solution. But you can disagree with him and still enjoy the argument.

THE VICTORIAN HOUSE—Philip Child—The Ryerson Press—54 pp., $2.25.

The title poem of this collection is a speculative essay in freely moving blank verse on the basic problems of philosophic thinking—man's soul and goal. The easy flow of the blank verse is varied with lyrical interludes that accentuate, rather than flaw, the artistic unity of the piece, and greatly heighten its readability.

Philip Child is an English Professor—(I am one of those who regret the dominance of Canadian poetry by professors, although recognizing its present inevitability)—and novelist of distinction. As poetry, "THE VICTORIAN HOUSE" falls short of being distinguished. It may be argued that he could have approached his theme more successfully in prose, but personally I find the form pleasing and well suited to the dominant symbolism of the old family home, revisited on the eve of sale and wrecking.

It is the tour of the old home that starts the protagonist on his speculative Odyssey. He recalls the living and the dying that have given its rooms meaning, and the lessons learned within its walls, his meditation taking forms like the following:

> "I learned to love
> The look that lights a face with understanding,
> And love the first attempt that greatly wins
> Or stoutly faces failure, and love the hand
> That blindly gropes to help another's trouble
> And I have learned to love, though fitfully,
> The willing and unwilling soul, half bound
> Half free, of Everyman, nailed to the cross
> For all his brothers . . . "

The sentimental journey through rooms and the speculative journey through ideas culminates in a recollection of death. The meditations rooted in this recollection imply a synthesis of Christian-pagan answers to the old questions.

One of the problems which the protagonist finds most difficulty in resolving is that of evil. I quote to illustrate both his difficulty, and the "style" of his lyric verse:

> "I saw a snake devour a mouse
> I heard the rats invade the house,
> Two things I cannot look above:
> I cannot separate the sin
> From the soul that let it in
> And I can only pray to love."

The comments of Mr. Hammer, the house-agent with an eye only for wood rot, rats and the possibilities of salvaging "trim", are skilfully placed as landmarks along the stream of introspection.

The dozen short pieces completing the volume are of unequal quality, the most successful being those that closely harmonize with the ambitious title poem.

POETRY IN MODERN IRELAND—Audstin Clarke—Colm O Lochlainn, Dublin—71 pp., 2s.

This attractively printed and decorated chapbook is the second in a series planned by the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland. Perhaps it has special interest for Canadians as an indication of one possible future fruit of the Massey Report.

In any event, it offers a sampling—too slim to justify critical appraisal—of contemporary Irish poetry, and a retrospective survey of the verse phase of the Celtic movement, of which Yeats, Synge, "A.E." and Katherine Tynan were publicly recognized exponents. If we are to accept Mr. Clarke's survey, the best of modern Irish verse still derives from the people's distant past—is still rooted in pagan mythology, and conditioned by ecclesiastical "discipline". Much of the most attractive of the verse quoted is presented as translation from the native tongue. This quatrain is from a translation by Padraic Pearse, one of the poet-rebels executed in 1916:

> "You have taken east and you have taken west from me,
> You have taken the path before me and the path behind me,
> You have taken moon and you have taken sun from me,
> And great is my fear that you have taken God from me!"

Mr. Clarke's brief discussion closes on a pessimistic note, which I fear will accord with the thoughts of Canadian poets. "In these scant days poetry must be content to go without," he writes. "Hope may be a foundling but we cannot conceal its birth."

POEMS, 1945-1951—Hans Ehrmann-Ewart—Privately printed—Santiago, Chile—9 pp.

These lyrics by a young Austrian raised and educated in Chile hold promise. They are "mood" pieces, expressed in a compact, clear-cut form

that suggest modern European influences. A sample from the last poem of a trilogy, "THE RIVERS", suggests his style and something of his potentialities:

"And now I walk
Among trembling forests,
Jeering at buzzards
Smiling at rivers,
Singing a song
With a thousand voices,
Hearing the echo
Of many a foot-print
Sounding the horn
To many a battle . . . "

And here are a few lines that imply his artistic attitude:

"In the poem lies the creation
In the simple image, the simple line.
The pattering feet that rhythmically
move along a polished floor
The cigarette smoke and its
phantastic drawings
as it moves along mid-air."

I hope that Mr. Ehrmann-Ewart will cultivate wider fields of inspiration in future, more ambitious, volumes.

Goodridge MacDonald

COLLECTED POEMS—Keith Douglas—Editions Poetry London—151 pp., 12s. 6d.

I SEE A LIGHT—David Dainow—Primal Publications Eng.—45 pp., No price.

It is an inestimable advantage, if you intend to be a poet, to select a birthplace in England. The merry ghosts of Ben Jonson and Will Shakespeare seem not to be entirely absent, and undoubtedly Keith Douglas, before he died in Normandy, must have felt their influence.

Not that Douglas wrote like the Elizabethans; his poetry is hard and spare of language, economical with words and entirely mature. It is marked also by an extreme pessimism—call it realism—not entirely born of his part in the warfare of the Libyan campaign. This fact is shown by some of his earlier work. But perhaps that "realism" was heightened in the Western Desert, for I do not think the immediate drama of battle was drama to him, but merely the face of death leaning a little closer.

However, through all Douglas' poems is the lyric ghost that cannot quite be exorcised. His whimsical humor that describes the army as "the kindly visitor who meant so well all winter but at last fell unaccountably to killing in the spring".

The only thing I do not like about Douglas is his lack of hope—he could foresee nothing in the future but death and destruction. Which is understandable under the circumstances, and surely the black mood would have passed had he survived the war.

You cannot read the poet's work without coming to know him well, and it is an acquaintanceship worth making. The masks with which he sometimes deceived himself, the sharp moments of insight, the cynicism, and underneath the warm human being.

The first part of this collected volume amounts to a vivid record of life and people in the Western Desert, and Douglas makes the reader see and feel it all, even understand it a little. The juvenile section gives the impression that the author must have been incredibly precocious. His poem, "CANOE", written at Oxford in 1940, is unforgettable.

"I SEE A LIGHT. These are poems of musing and introspection, sometimes perilously close to prose. But it is not very interesting prose, expressing the conventional pattern of expected behaviour, the norm which people seldom follow in reality. These are not bad poems in the amateurish sense, but they do not go very far beneath the human surface.

Alfred W. Purdy

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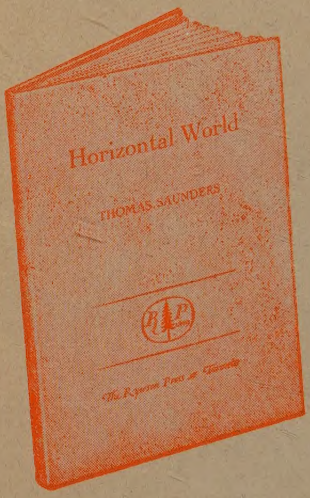

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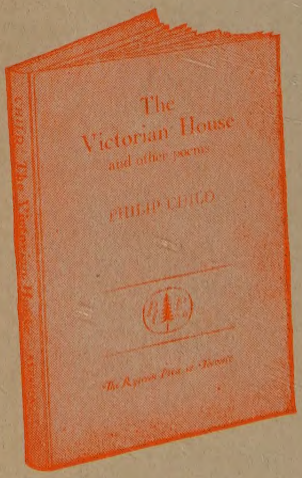

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